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Negro Culture In West Africa. By GEORGE W. ELLIS, K.C., F.R.G.S. The Neale Publishing Co., New York, 1914. 290 pages. \$2.00 net.

This study by Mr. Ellis of the culture of West Africa as represented by the Vai tribe, is valuable both as a document and as a scientific treatment of an important phase of the color problem. As a document it is an additional and a convincing piece of evidence of the ability of the Negro to treat scientifically so intricate a problem as the rise, development, and meaning of the social institutions of a people. Easy, yet forceful in style; well documented with footnotes and cross references; amply illustrated with twenty-seven real representations of tools, weapons, musical instruments and other pieces of handwork; containing, incidentally, a good bibliography of the subject; and finally, with its conclusions condensed in the last four pages, it is a book excellent in plan and in execution. The map, however, which has been selected for the book is overcrowded and, therefore, practically useless.

As a scientific study, its value is suggested by the topics emphasized, viz., "Climate," "Institutions," "Foreign Influence," "Proverbs," "Folklore," and "Writing System." Referring to the climate the author says: "In West Africa the body loses its strength, the memory its retentiveness, and the will its energy. These are the effects observed upon persons remaining in West Africa only for a short time, and they form a part of the experience of almost every person who has lived on the West Coast. White persons,—with beautiful skin, clear and soft, and with rosy cheeks,—after they have been in West Africa for a while become dark and tawny like the inhabitants of Southern Spain and Italy. If we can detect these effects of the West African climate in only a short time upon persons who come to the West Coast, what must have been the effect of such a climate upon the Negroes who for centuries have been exposed to its hardships?"

The moral life of the Vais appears to be the product of their social institutions and their severe environment. These institutions grow out of the necessities of government for the tribe under circumstances which suggest and enforce their superstitions and beliefs. This is not so with respect to education. It seems that the influence of the "Greegree Bush" (a school system) is now considerably weakened by the Liberian institutions on the one hand, the Mohammedan faith and customs on the other. So that now this

institution falls short of achieving its aims, and putting its principles into practice.

The study as a whole gives evidence of the author's eight years of travel and research, and can be read with profit by all friends of mankind.

WALTER DYSON.

The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861. By C. G. WOODSON, Ph.D. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1915. 460 pages. \$2.00 net.

The very title of Dr. Woodson's book causes one who is interested in the race history to ask questions and think. There are comparatively few people who know anything about the efforts made to educate the Negro prior to 1861. Consequently, from the first page of the book to the last, the reader is continually acquiring facts concerning this most interesting and important phase of the Colored-American's history of which he has never heard before, and some of which seem too wonderful to be true. But it is not possible to doubt anything which is found in Dr. Woodson's book. One knows that every statement he reads concerning the education of the Negro prior to 1861 is true, for the author has taken pains to substantiate every fact that he presents.

It is difficult to imagine any phase of race history more fascinating and more thrilling than an account of the desperate and prolonged struggle between the forces which made for the mental and spiritual enlightenment of the slave and those which opposed these humane and Christian efforts with all the bitterness and strength at their command. The reasons assigned by those who favored the education of the slaves and the methods suggested together with the arguments used by those who were opposed to it and the laws enacted to prevent it furnish an illuminating study in human nature.

One is surprised to find that very early in the history of the colonies there were scholars and statesmen who did not hesitate to declare their belief in the intellectual possibilities of the Negro. These men agreed with George Buchanan that the Negro had talent for the fine arts and under favorable circumstances could achieve something worth while in literature, mathematics and philosophy. The high estimate placed upon the innate ability of the Negro may be attributed to the fact that early in the history of the country there was a goodly number of slaves who had managed to attain a